0:00 / 1:19

Professor Ed Witten attacks my quantum gravity work using only lies and ignorance

Ed Witten: “I’ve noticed … critics don’t seem to try very hard to work on a competing theory or to suggest one.”

NIGE COOK
APR 13, 2025

2 Share Transcript

“I’ve noticed … critics don’t seem to try very hard to work on a competing theory or to suggest one.”

Ed Witten ignorantly attacking my work on quantum gravity: https://vixra.org/abs/1111.0111

Nige’s Substack

Authors

Nige Cook

https://vixra.org/abs/2503.0183
https://vixra.org/abs/1305.0012

Ed Witten (interview clip above): “I’ve noticed … critics don’t seem to try very hard to work on a competing theory or to suggest one.”

A bit rich, methinks, coming from the guy who got greasy pole climber and "string theorist" Dr Lubos Motl into Harvard Physics Department to write a blog "defending" string theory by calling for the end of critics like Dr Woit.

My answer to Dr Witten's propaganda is page 50 of https://vixra.org/pdf/1111.0111v1.pdf Note that I expose Dr Witten’s propaganda trick on that page, of not naming people he is attacking, in order to try to avoid escalations of arguments! THAT AIN’T WORKING, FFS!

Robert A. Wilson **Says:**
August 6, 2024 at 6:07 pm

We’re off to see the Witten

The Wonderful Witten of IAS

We hear he is a whiz of whiz if ever a whiz there was

If ever oh ever a whiz there was

The Witten of IAS is one because

Because because because because becaaauuse!

Of the wonderful things that he does

Lars **Says:**
August 6, 2024 at 5:52 pm

If I only had a brane " (by Ed Witten)

I could count on all my fingers,
conferrin' with the Stringers
Upon a higher plane
And my head I'd be scratchin' while my
thoughts were busy hatchin'
If I only had a brane
I'd unravel every riddle
And with gravitons I'd fiddle
And it wouldn't be in vain
I would not be just a nothin'
my head all full of stuffin'
My H index aflame
I would dance and be merry, life would be a
String-a-berry
If I only had a brane

In case you don't love beautiful poetry:

"Maybe a better wording for the WSJ question would have been "Do you think Trump should be able to take away money from anyone with

the excuse “wouldn’t that be cool?”” Given MAGA attitudes, I’m guessing that would get about 20%." -Dr Pete Woit

Real Peace Monger *says:*

Your comment is awaiting moderation.

April 15, 2025 at 4:55 pm

It's not about "being cool", but being HONEST about groupthink pseudo-education:

“The very magnitude of the power over men’s minds that a highly centralised and government-dominated system of education places in the hands of the authorities ought to make one hesitant before accepting it too readily.”

– Professor F. A. Hayek, The Constitution of Liberty, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1960, p. 379.

“The student … is accustomed to being told what he should believe, and to the arbitration of authority. … Ultimately, self-confidence requires a rational foundation. … we should face our tasks with confidence based upon a dispassionate appreciation of attested merits. It is something gained if we at least escape the domination of inhibiting ideas.”

– Professor Cecil Alec Mace, The Psychology of Study, 1963, p90.

> “Little Billy may become a scientist as earlier he might have turned priest, and know the sacred texts … The chromed apparatus is blessed by distant authority, the water thrice-filtered for purity, and he wears the white antiseptic gown … But the masses still move by faith. … I have fear of what science says, not the science that is hard-won knowledge but that other science, the faith imposed on people by a self-elected administering priesthood. … In the hands of an unscrupulous and power-grasping priesthood, this efficient tool, just as earlier … has become an instrument of bondage. … A metaphysics that ushered in the Dark Ages is again flourishing. … Natural sciences turned from description to a ruminative scholarship concerned with authority. … On the superstition that reduction to number is the same as abstraction, it permits any arbitrary assemblage of data to be mined for relations that can then be named and reified in the same way as Fritz Mauthner once imagined that myths arise. … Our sales representatives, trained in your tribal taboos, will call on you shortly. You have no choice but to buy. For this is the new rationalism, the new messiah, the new Church, and the new Dark Ages come upon us.”
>
> – Jerome Y. Lettvin, The Second Dark Ages, paper given at the UNESCO Symposium on “Culture and Science”, Paris, 6-10 September 1971 (in Robin Clarke, Notes for the Future, Thames and Hudson, London, 1975, pp. 141-50).

> “Scepticism is … directed against the view of the opposition and against minor ramifications of one’s own basic ideas, never against the basic ideas themselves. Attacking the basic ideas evokes taboo reactions … scientists only rarely solve their problems, they make lots of mistakes … one collects ‘facts’ and prejudices, one discusses the matter, and one finally votes. But while a democracy makes some effort to explain the process so that everyone can understand it, scientists either conceal it, or bend it … No scientist will admit that voting plays a role in his subject. Facts, logic, and methodology alone decide – this is what the fairy-tale tells us. … This is how scientists have deceived themselves and everyone else … It is the vote of everyone concerned that decides fundamental issues … and not the authority of big-shots hiding behind a non-existing methodology. … Science itself uses the method of ballot, discussion, vote, though without a clear grasp of its mechanism, and in a heavily biased way.”
>
> – Professor Paul Feyerabend, Against Method, 1975, final chapter.
>
> “Children lose interest … because a natural interest in the world around them has been replaced by an unnatural acceptance of the soundness of certain views, the correctness of particular opinions and the validity of specific claims.”

– David Lewis, You can teach your child intelligence, Book Club Associates, London, 1982, p. 258.

“Crimestop means the faculty of stopping short at the threshold of any dangerous thought. It includes the power of not grasping analogies, of failing to perceive logical errors, of misunderstanding the simplest arguments … and of being bored or repelled by any train of thought which is capable of leading in a heretical direction. Crimestop, in short, means protective stupidity.”

– George Orwell, 1984 (Orwell's "crimestop" = Herman Kahn and Barry Bruce-Briggs "Educated Incapacity", in their 1972 book "Things to Come"!)

“After the war in the 1950’s, Guenther Schwab’s brand of environmentalism also played a fundamental role in the development of the green anti-nuclear movement in West Germany. The dropping of the atom bomb and the nuclear fallout of the Cold War helped to globalize the greens into an apocalyptic ‘peace’ movement with Guenther Schwab being one of its original spokesmen. The unprecedented destruction in Germany brought on by industrialized warfare never before seen in the history of the world only served to radicalize the German greens into an apocalyptic movement. Their hatred toward global capitalism became even more vitriolic precisely because the capitalists were now in

charge of a dangerous nuclear arsenal that threatened the entire planet."

– Mark Musser, "The Nazi Origins of Apocalyptic Global Warming Theory", American Thinker, February 15, 2011.

Irving L. Janis, Victims of Groupthink, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1972:

"I use the term "groupthink" ... when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action."(p. 9)

"... the group's discussions are limited ... without a survey of the full range of alternatives."(p. 10)

"The objective assessment of relevant information and the rethinking necessary for developing more differentiated concepts can emerge only out of the crucible of heated debate [to overcome inert prejudice/status quo], which is anathema to the members of a concurrence-seeking group."(p.61)

"Eight main symptoms run through the case studies of historic fiascoes ... an illusion of invulnerability ... collective efforts to ... discount warnings ... an unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality ... stereotyped views of enemy leaders ... dissent is contrary to what is expected of all loyal members ... self-censorship of ... doubts and counterarguments ... a shared illusion of unanimity ... (partly resulting from

self-censorship of deviations, augmented by the false assumption that silence means consent)… the emergence of … members who protect the group from adverse information that might shatter their shared complacency about the effectiveness and morality of their decisions."(pp.197-8)

"… other members are not exposed to information that might challenge their self-confidence."(p.206)

"You must here distinguish – especially in teaching – the science from the forms or procedures that are sometimes used in developing science. … great religions are dissipated by following form without remembering the direct content of the teaching of the great leaders. In the same way, it is possible to follow form and call it science, but that is pseudo-science. In this way, we all suffer from the kind of tyranny we have today in the many institutions that have come under the influence of pseudoscientific advisers. … We have many studies in teaching, for example, in which people make observations, make lists, do statistics, and so on … They are merely an imitative form of science … The result of this pseudoscientific imitation is to produce experts, which many of you are. …. As a matter of fact, I can also define science another way: Science is the belief in the ignorance of experts."

– Richard P. Feynman, "What is Science?", presented at the fifteenth annual meeting of the National Science Teachers Association, 1966 in New York City, published in The Physics Teacher Vol. 7, issue 6, 1968, pp. 313-320.

(above quotes are from our blog post The politics of Science, 2011)

Want more of this Trump supporting anti-elitist Ivy League craptrap religion masquerading as science, debunked? Yep. Thought so. Here's some more from our post https://nige.wordpress.com/2022/12/27/edward-a-schuert-for-understanding-the-path-integral/

Lapp's 1965 book *The New Priesthood* begins (page 1) with the following quotation from **President Woodrow Wilson**, on the dangers of [BIG SCIENCE] dictatorship by secretive expert advisers, like a Manhattan project:

"What I fear is a government of experts. God forbid that in a democratic society we should resign the task and give the government over to experts. What are we for if we are to be scientifically taken care of by a small number of gentlemen who are the only men who understand the job? because if we don't understand the job, then we are not a free people."

Lapp then points out how he saw science change during WWII from a poorly funded, low-prestige business of struggling individuals pursuing unpopular technical questions to find the truth, into today's "big science" of groupthink-dominated government (taxpayer)-funded teams of aim-biased technicians, seeking wealth and prestige, paying only lip-service to freedom and objectivity:

"Today ... the lone researcher is a *rara avis* (rare bird); most scientists team up to work together toward agreed upon objectives [not an unbiased agenda]. ... A single experiment may involve a hundred scientists ... the research is no longer unspecified as to objective ... democracy faces its most severe test in preserving its traditions in an age of scientific revolution. ... scientists in key advisory positions wield enormous power. The ordinary checks and balances in a democracy fail when the Congress, for example, is incapable of intelligent discourse on vital issues. The danger to our democracy is that national policy will be decided by the few acting without even attempting to enter a public discourse ... our democracy will become a timocracy. ... Even if no formal secrecy is invoked by the government, an issue might as well be classified 'secret' if the people in a democracy are incapable of carrying on an intelligent discussion of it. ... The danger is that a new priesthood of scientists may usurp

the traditional roles of democratic decision-making"

– Dr Ralph E. Lapp, *The New Priesthood: The Scientific Elite and the Uses of Power,* Harper, New York, 1965, pages 2-3.

Lapp on page 8 quotes **President Thomas Jefferson:**
"To furnish the citizens with full and correct information is a matter of the highest importance. If we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."

Education in fact, not groupthink indoctrination nor the propaganda substitutes for fact used by dictatorships.

Lapp on page 14 quotes **President Dwight Eisenhower's 17 January 1961 farewell address:**

"Today the solitary inventor, tinkering in his shop, has been overshadowed by task forces of scientists … In the same fashion, the free university, historically the fountainhead of free ideas and scientific discovery, has experienced a revolution … Partly because of the huge costs involved, a government contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity.

… The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present – and is gravely to be regarded."

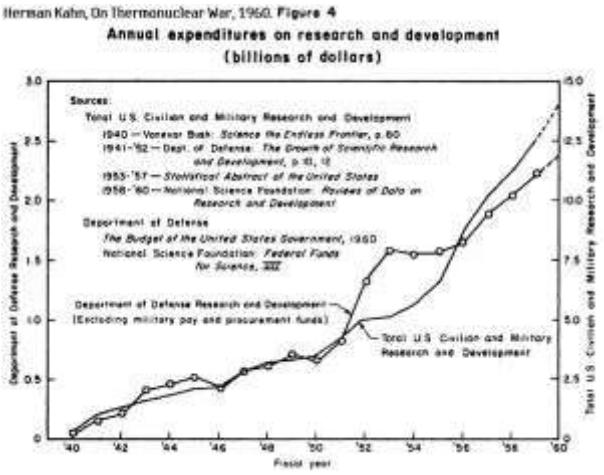
Lapp on page 16 quotes **Dr Alvin Weinberg** (**director of Oak Ridge National Laboratory, 1955-1973**):

"I do believe that big science can ruin our universities, by diverting the universities from their primary purpose and by converting our university professors into administrators, housekeepers and publicists."

Alvin Weinberg expanded on his critique of "big science" in his 1967 book, *Reflections on Big Science*.

We quoted Alvin Weinberg's analogy of populist anti-nuclear pseudoscientific rants to witch hunts, in a previous post (linked here). Weinberg wrote *Appendix B: Civil Defense and Nuclear Energy*, pages 275-7 of *The Control of Exposure of the Public to Ionizing Radiation in the Event of Accident or Attack*, Proceedings of a Symposium Sponsored by the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements (NCRP), April 27-29, 1981, Held at the International Conference Center, Reston, Virginia. (The proceedings were published on May 15, 1982, by the U.S. National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements, Bethesda, Md.):

> **“That people will eventually acquire more sensible attitudes towards low level radiation is suggested by an analogy, pointed out by William Clark, between our fear of very low levels of radiation insult and of witches. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, people knew that their children were dying and their cattle were getting sick because witches were casting spells on them. During these centuries no fewer than 500,000 witches were burned at the stake. Since the witches were causing the trouble, if you burn the witches, then the trouble will disappear. Of course, one could never be really sure that the witches were causing the trouble. Indeed, though many witches were killed, the troubles remained. The answer was not to stop killing the witches – the answer was: kill more witches. … I want to end on a happy note. The Inquisitor of the south of Spain, Alonzo Frias, in 1610 decided that he ought to appoint a committee to examine the connection between witches and all these bad things that were happening. The committee could find no real correlation … So the Inquisitor decided to make illegal the use of torture to extract a confession from a witch. … it took 200 years for the Inquisition to run its course on witches.”**


Herman Kahn, On Thermonuclear War, 1960. Figure 4
Annual expenditures on research and development
(billions of dollars)
Sources:
Total U.S. Civilian and Military Research and Development
1940 — Vannevar Bush: Science the Endless Frontier, p. 80
1941-'52 — Dept. of Defense: The Growth of Scientific Research and Development, p. 10, 11
1953-'57 — Statistical Abstract of the United States
1958-'60 — National Science Foundation: Reviews of Data on Research and Development
Department of Defense
The Budget of the United States Government, 1960
National Science Foundation: Federal Funds for Science, XII
Department of Defense Research and Development
(Excluding military pay and procurement funds)
Total U.S. Civilian and Military Research and Development
Department of Defense Research and Development
Total U.S. Civilian and Military Research and Development
Fiscal year

Above: Herman Kahn's graph of the massive rise in U.S. government taxpayer funded research and development from 1940-1960, about 20% of which is military and 80% is civilian. (Lapp states on page 45 of *The New Priesthood* that in 1939 the entire U.S. Federal research and development budget was just $50 million, mostly for agricultural science, with a small portion for ship studies at the Naval Research Laboratory, and just $2 million for physics research, by the National Bureau of Standards.) The Manhattan project which resulted in the first nuclear weapons used in 1945, was reported to have cost $2 billion from 1942-1945.

Thus began "big science". By 1960s, six times as much as that was being spent *per year.* Essentially all of this expenditure is decided in advance by timetable and grant-proposal dominated groupthink bureaucracy and officialdom, not by a completely unbiased search for the truth by individuals who are free to follow the evidence. You cannot find the

unknown by a search governed by planned timetables.

Lapp quotes an editorial by *Science* editor Dr Philip Abelson on page 30 of *The New Priesthood*:

"The witness in questioning the wisdom of the establishment pays a price and incurs hazards. He is diverted from his professional activities. He stirs the enmity of powerful foes. He fears that reprisals may extend beyond him to his institution. Perhaps he fears shadows, but … prudence seems to dictate silence."

UPDATE: More on the "politics of physics"-garbage from Dr Tommaso Dorigo, who was friendly in the old days (although he once - many years ago - offered to host a quantum gravity article of mine on his old blog, but then "moved on" before I had even submitted it!). Tommaso writes about peer review:

"I can also report here on my own experience as an author, as a reviewer, and as an editor of scientific publications. I have significant experience as an author - **I have authored over 1800 articles** (**but I have not read them all!**) [**how do you author without reading the submitted article?!**] … **As an author, I feel that there are fewer and fewer good reviews of the works I submit.**

"**This is not surprising: reviewers are not subjected to an evaluation of their work, and**

when time pressured, they will reduce their effort. I see this happening also when I handle submissions as an editor: many reviews are so shallow that I need to ignore them.

"And as a reviewer, I have reduced significantly the number of papers I accept to read, for all the reasons already discussed (and on top of it, a little bit also because I am often bored by content-free articles I am asked to screen). ... I am presently handling manuscripts submitted to four Elsevier journals.

"These are high-profile, respectable journals, but their reputation does not increase significantly the odds that a colleague will accept my requests for review. So what happens is that I find myself having to ask to 8, 10, or even 20 academics to get a single review back. This is frustrating, but it is worse than that. Because this blows out of proportions the amount of time I have to spend to organize the peer review of each submitted article.

"What happens is that instead of investing time on reading the article, I will just skim through its contents for obvious signs of crackpottery ... I am able to annoy a lot of people. ... But it is easy to understand that this makes the scientists at the receiving end of these continuous review requests less and less sympathetic with the system...

“I have come to the conclusion that the only real response to a system based on the profit of private publishers is to migrate to a situation where reviewers are **paid for their time**. Maybe just 100$ per review would suffice. It would be sustainable, as it corresponds to less than 5% of the typical publishing costs. ..."**Paid peer review? Anathema!" I can hear some of you say. Yes, it sounds bad. But think about it: publishers are exploiting working hours of academics to increase their profits. The system is not working - reviews are less and less careful, and garbage gets published. If a part of the profits were given to reviewers, like what is already happening with editors, the tendency could be reversed in no time.**” - https://www.science20.com/tommaso_dorigo/the_problem_with_peer_review-257366

UPDATE (17 April 2025) more “Super High Intensity Training (S.H.I.T.)” and “Fallacious Ubiquitous Crazy Knowledge (F.U.C.K.)” generously published by Dr Peter Woit on his blog “Not Even Wrong” hosted by Columbia University’s math department (some may question if the word Fallacious is misplaced and should be “Fascist”, but let’t keep this discussion uncontroversial and unprovocative, shall we?): https://www.math.columbia.edu/~woit/wordpress/?p=14578

The Situation at Columbia VIII

Posted on April 16, 2025 by woit

"There was a standing room only Arts and Sciences faculty meeting today here at Columbia, in which the acting president Claire Shipman spoke for a while and then took questions from faculty members. The questions on the whole were challenging her on exactly the issues I've been repeatedly bringing up in these blog entries (why the lies about "antisemitism"? why won't you go to court to challenge the illegal use of dictatorial powers? why won't you do what Tufts did to support its student who was grabbed off the street?). Shipman did not provide much of an answer to these questions, or any new information about what is going on in the struggle between the university and the Trump administration, but at least she heard these questions loud and clear.

"Several questioners very directly confronted her about why the university will not in any way support pro-Palestinian students like Mohammed Khalil and Mohsen Mahdawi, unlike the way Tufts has gone to court to support Rumeysa Ozturk. … Rupert Murdoch's editorial board at the Wall Street Journal has always been relentlessly devoted to attacking Democrats and liberals and defending the

Republican side of all issues, even as this side descends into MAGA craziness. Today their main editorial is Donald Trump Tries to Run Harvard: Many of his demands on the school exceed his power under the Constitution. It ends with exactly the argument the Columbia administration has been unwilling to make publicly for fear of alienating the Trump people they are negotiating with …

"Also supporting Harvard today is Scott Aaronson who was fine with the Trump administration taking Columbia's grants away to force the university to adopt the policies he favors. Quoted on Scott's blog is something everyone should be thinking about: "If you ever wondered what you would do in Germany in February of 1933, you're doing it now." In particular, Martin Niemöller's "First they came for the Communists…" accurately described the situation in 1933, as the new dictator came into the universities and removed the Communists (since they were "terrorists", analogs of current-day pro-Palestinian protestors) and their supposed influence. In 1933, anti-Communists were generally happy to see someone come in and rid their institution of the Communist problem, even if they didn't otherwise support the new dictatorship. The difference with 1933 is that we know what happened next, and for us the future is not yet determined."

No, Dr Woit, the difference is that in 1933 fascism wanted to murder the Jews, today Trump wants to defend the Jews, proving that he's anti-fascist, not fascist. Holocaust deniers who "just want to kill the Jews so the Palestinians can have their land back" have a lot in tune with Putin, who "just wants to kill Ukrainians to get Ukraine back!"

We had this whole left-wing fascism double-talk gibberish Orwellian propaganda front here in the UK only a few years ago, "Momentum", spearheaded by racist CND boss Jeremy Corbyn who backed Hamas' terrorists as they murdered Jews. Holocaust denying fascists masquerading as as fucking communists, just as happened when Russia and Germany jointly invaded Poland from different ends in 1939, starting WWII. That's what they call "peace", see Orwell's "1984" for their definition: peace = war. They reverse the meanings of words.

So they are all fucking thugs and Woit has now well and truly joined them, in awe of ring leader, devil in carnate Ed Witten, allegedly sent from Mars (thus the "M-theory" name, allegedly) to persuade us we live in one of 10^500 parallel metastable vacua, a 10 dimensional superstring brane on an 11 dimensional supergravity bulk. The sole purpose of this is to create a new mathematical epicycle type myth akin to Ptolemy's or Plato's mathematical metaphysics, to enable bigoted pseudo-peer reviewers to

sneer at reality. Instead of debunking that, Peter Woit is now sinking into the quicksand of Adolf Hitler style eugenics pseudoscience fascism, wiping out the proved reality of quantum gravity by referring to it as "nonsense", and then having the gall to start ranting that Trump is shutting down American pseudoscience. Woit, mate, you've had two decades to back reality. Instead you dismiss it as nonsense.

In Woit's comments section:

Scott Aaronson *says:*

April 16, 2025 at 5:16 pm

"… I said that I believed your colleagues on the task force that Columbia's antisemitism problem is or was real—a claim that was somehow sufficient, by itself, to send you into fits of rage and personal abuse against me. I also said that I hoped the crisis would quickly be resolved in a way that restored 100% of Columbia's funding while also ending the abuse of Jewish and Israeli students, disruption of classes, takeover of common areas as "Zionist-free zones," etc. etc. Obviously that's not what happened. … If I lived in Germany in 1933, I hope I'd have the presence of mind to say that yes, the Communists are evil and terrifying (as was already known from the experience of Stalin's USSR), Hitler is correct to fear them, but also Hitler is even more evil, so let's see if we can tamp down these terrifying oscillations rather than spiralling into one

extreme of unspeakable evil as a reaction to the other one."

Peter Woit *says:*

April 16, 2025 at 6:14 pm

"... As for my rage and personal abuse, I'm not going to apologize. You have no idea what is actually going on here and you had no business attacking me and my institution with bogus antisemitism charges at the moment a Fascist dictator started trying to destroy us. We are in 1933 now and my institution and people around me are bearing the brunt of it. It's bad enough to have to deal with the endless idiots (e.g the commenters on your blog...) who think Trump is great because they are ignorant fools. You're very smart and otherwise sensible, so should know better."

Scott Aaronson *says:*

April 16, 2025 at 8:11 pm

"Peter,

"Yet again, we see that all your invective against me hinges on a single claim: that the charge of an atmosphere of fear and intimidation for Jewish and Israeli students at Columbia in late 2023 and continuing through 2024 is entirely bogus. If you're right, it would strongly suggest not only that Gil Zussman is a liar, but also that Ester Fuchs is a liar, Clemence Boulouque is a

liar, Jeremy Dauber is a liar, Rebecca Dobrin is a liar, Deborah Valenze is a liar, and everyone else who put their names to that long, harrowing task force report is a liar. How confident are you? The one witness who you were able to produce for me was an equivocal one. …

"And yes, when Communists murder millions of people, it does increase the chance that a Hitler will seize power, in part by promising to protect people from Communists, and then murder tens of millions more. And when a significant fraction of the social science and humanities students and faculty at Columbia see Hamas burn babies alive, starve its own population, throw its internal critics off the roofs of buildings, etc … and then they decide to cheer Hamas with inverted red triangles and cries of "intifada," that this is what they support, it does increase the chance that fascist goons will seize the opportunity to try to destroy Columbia, *including* all the wonderful things there that the fascists hate. This is, alas, a recurring theme of human history."

Peter Woit *says:*

April 16, 2025 at 8:31 pm

"Scott,
"a significant fraction of the social science and humanities students and faculty at Columbia see Hamas burn babies alive, starve its own population, throw its internal critics off the

roofs of buildings, etc ... and then they decide to cheer Hamas with inverted red triangles and cries of “intifada,”

“Again, you have no idea at all what is going on at Columbia. You live in a fanatic’s obsessive fever-dream. It’s a mania and there’s no way I can help you.”

Woit is now misguided, like Witten. He simply has a delusional hatred of plain reality. Precisely like Hitler with eugenics evil pseudoscience, labelled “elitism”.

2 Likes

Discussion about this video

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